Lupercalia

She-Wolf

Lupercalia is a Roman ritual of purification and fertility dating from such an ancient time that even the Romans of the first century BCE had forgotten its origin and to which Gods it was dedicated and even the meaning of some of its symbolism. (Contrary to Z Budapest's statements, it was not known whether it was to Faunus and in fact I think it may have been sacred to the more ancient founding Goddess, Rumina, the She-Wolf of Rome.) Central to the ritual is the lustration (light flogging) with a goat skin scourge (see, Gardner didn't invent it). This was often accompanied by much rowdiness and horse-play. The purpose was the purification of the people from curses, bad luck and infertility. The ritual is performed on February 15. The name of the month comes from the februa, anything used in purifying including wool (used for cleaning), brooms, pine boughs (which make the air sweet and pure), etc.

The rite began in the cave of the She-Wolf in the city of Rome where legend had it that the founders of the city, Romulus and Remus, had been suckled by the wolf before they were found by a shepherd. The sacred fig tree grew in front of the cave. Vestals brought to the site of the sacrifice the sacred cakes made from the first ears of the last years grain harvest. Two naked young men presided over the sacrifice of a dog and a goat. With the bloody knife, their foreheads were smeared with blood, then wiped clean with wool dipped in milk. The young men laughed and girded themselves in the skin of the sacrificed goat. Much feasting followed. Finally, using strips of the goat skin, the young men ran, each leading a group of priests, around the base of the hills of Rome, around the ancient sacred boundary of the old city called the pomarium. During this run, the women of the city would vie for the opportunity to be scourged by the young men as they ran by, some baring their flesh to get the best results of the fertility blessing (you can see why the Christian church tried so hard to get this ritual banned, but it was so popular that it continued for quite some time under the new regime.)

Except for the intrusion of foreign cults, this was the only Roman ritual where a goat was sacrificed. Dogs were only offered to Robigus (a guardian associated with crops), the Lares Praestites (the guardians of community), and Mana Genata (ancestral guardians).

Because of the cave, the fig tree, the milk, and such, I suspect the very oldest forms of this rite honored a Goddess. Unlike some of the other Roman rites like the October Horse sacrifice, there is no other Indo-European equivalent in Vedic, Scandinavian, Irish, or Indo-Iranian traditions.

With modifications, the Temple of Pomona performed Lupercalias and has a great time.

Fast Forward
2019-05-28 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=29)
Kindly Pagans, White Supremacists Hold Dueling Gatherings In Southern State Park

Keep the Faith
2019-05-27 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=27)
Young black women are leaving Christianity and embracing African witchcraft

CBN News
2019-05-27 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=25)
Atlanta Church Hires Psychic Medium to Minister to Congregation

The Week
2019-05-25 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=23)
The princess of Norway and her shaman lover

Religion News Service
2019-05-24 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=21)
Getting in on - and tossed out of - the Satanist Temple joke - Religion News Service

More Articles (/articles2/)

Search

Quote of the moment:

I salivate at the sight of mittens.

This site has received hits since Aug 4, 2000

COPYLEFT:
The entire content of all public pages in The Pagan Library (graphics, text and HTML) are free information, released under the terms of the GPL. All copyrighted items mentioned are the property of their respective owners, and no form of ownership or endorsement is implied.

Last modified: August 19 2018 14:57:16